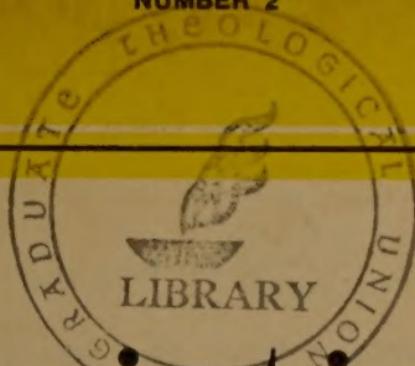


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# Christian Order

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## **PLEASE**

let me thank all those who have renewed their subscriptions so promptly and with such generosity during December and January. I am very grateful.

May I ask those few who have yet to reply to their December and January reminders to be so good as to do so without delay. Thank you so much.

—*Paul Crane, S.J.*

*Cum Permissu Superiorum*

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# Christian Order

EDITED BY

## Paul Crane SJ

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VOLUME 26

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NO. 2

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## Conditional Restoration

THE EDITOR

I IMAGINE that the lifting last October of the ban on the Tridentine Mass was greeted with mixed feelings by those—of the many so anxious for its restoration—who were made aware in one way or another of the partial fulfilment of their hopes.

I choose my words most carefully and at the price of what is, without doubt, a most ungainly sentence. I do so because I wish to stress the fact that even now — four months after the lifting of the ban—there are, in all probability, many lovers of the Old Mass who are unaware of its partial restoration to a place in the Church's life. I say this because the circumstances attending the promulgation of the Indult, which lifted the ban from the Tridentine Mass, appeared to me at the time to be pitched in as low a key as possible. The Catholic Press had little to say on the subject and most of what it did say added up to little more than the time-worn gambit of damning with faint praise. Few of its columnists or commentators affected to see the Holy Father's action as anything more than the compassionate gesture of an admittedly pastoral Pope to the very few, as they thought so wrongly, to whom the original change from Old Mass to New had brought suffering and sorrow. It was certainly that, but it was also a great deal more; above all, a telling blow at the new man-centered ecclesiology whose many adherents, consciously or not, tend to look at the New Mass (most cer-

tainly valid in itself) as little more than a community celebration. That you cannot do with the Old Mass. Its built-in structure is impervious to that kind of regard. Hence, the harsh—at times, I am afraid, vicious—reaction of contemporary liturgical experts, wedded to the new ecclesiology, to the restoration of the Tridentine Mass. They saw it as a threat to the very existence of what they thought of as their new post-conciliar Church and all they would have it stand for. They knew that, with the return of the Old Mass, even though hedged round with conditions, their dream of a new, cosmopolitan and broad-based, ecumenical church would be certain to fade with the fading of the New Mass before the coming once again amongst us of the Old. Just because it was what it was, the progress of the latter would prove irresistible. Hence, once again, their anger. It was of the kind that comes from fear. With the reinstatement of the Tridentine Mass, they saw themselves and their new ecclesiology as in danger of being progressively cornered. The boot now was about to be on the other foot. This prospect they found unpleasant.

Small wonder, then, that the public receipt of the Indult was muted, largely as a result of the Catholic Progressive's control of the Media and what might be described as Diocesan Authority's beneficent toleration of that control. Where these were concerned, the restoration of the Old Mass was made to appear as little more than a non-event. It was as if it had never happened. For it there was no joyful homecoming; no welcoming episcopal lead anywhere, so far as I know. A great deal of Progressive resentment. The prodigal had been allowed back on condition; for him, this time, there was no fattened calf. The Catholic Media, largely in Progressive hands, were quick to point out that, on the morrow of the Indult's promulgation, a Congress in the Vatican of Presidents and Secretaries of International Liturgical Commissions attended by representatives of Bishops' Conferences, criticized the Holy Father sharply for allowing the celebration of the Tridentine Mass, even on a conditional and limited basis. The Report from this Congress said that the Pope's decision of October 3rd was received with "grave concern, regret and

dismay". By whom, if not by themselves; but what and whom do they represent? The arrogance implicit in these words I find appalling.

It is also revealing. I spoke at the outset of this editorial of the mixed feelings of those lovers of the Old Mass who learnt of the lifting of the ban. The mixture was of gratitude and disappointment. Inevitably, the unphrased question that came to the minds of many of them must have been, Why, of why, did the Holy Father not go the whole way? I have reason to believe that this is what the Holy Father himself wanted—restoration of the Old Mass, without conditions, on a basis of parity of esteem with the New. This, I am led to believe, is what the Pope really desired. This he did not get, Supreme Authority in the Church that he is, because the opposition to his wishes in this regard—within the Vatican itself and within segments of Higher Church Authority outside the Vatican—was still too strong for him. In the event, he was pressurised into contenting himself with a second-best. No other course was open to him. At the moment, he is unable to go the whole way; confined to working within the limits of the possible. That is the most he can do.

I feel very sure that a Progressive plan is under way to pressure him into the withdrawal of the Indult; and the pressure will be extreme, hard, even, for the bravest to withstand. The more so because, given the conditions surrounding the restoration of the Old Mass, I feel very sure that applications for its celebration — as outlined in the Indult itself and explained in this issue of *Christian Order* by Father Bryan Houghton — will not have an easy passage. Then the story will be put about at the end of this trial year—of which we have already had four months—that there is little demand for the Old Mass and that the experiment has proved a failure. This, after the manner of the census of Catholic Opinion concerning the Tridentine Mass, which was called for a few years ago by the Holy Father himself, only to be smothered — to put it mildly — by those same forces which are opposed to him in the present instance. Will the methods used then to ensure the defeat of the Pope's plan be used again? It could be.

The present, then, is no time for giving way to disappointment, complaining that so little has been given to us so late. So little it may be, but it is something. On this we should build this way—let groups of Catholics everywhere in every country and diocese petition the Bishops for the Old Mass on the terms of the October Indult. Let them never take no for an answer. Let their petitions not cease. Let them take careful note of any episcopal refusal there may be in this regard.

This, in the first place. In the second, let them write straightway to the Holy Father to thank him for what he has gained for us—even though at first sight, it may seem so little. *All must* do this. For he needs desperately all the support we can give him. Let us, then, give it in the form of letters—short and most sincere—thanking him for what he has done so far in this matter of the Restoration of the Tridentine Mass. I am reliably informed that they should be addressed not to the Pope personally, but to Cardinal Ratzinger, with the request to his Eminence that he should pass them to the Holy Father. These two things we should do. They will remain ineffective unless backed wholeheartedly by our prayers. Cardinal Ratzinger's address is :

Congregation for the  
Doctrine of the Faith,  
Piazza Dei S. Uffizio, 11,  
00193 ROMA,  
Italy : (Vatican City).

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### THEN AND NOW

“Unlike many another Council, Vatican II will meet at a time when life in the Church is at once peaceful and fervent”.

Cardinal Montini, inaugurating a study week at the University of the Sacred Heart, Milan, in September, 1960. From *The Second Vatican Council* by Henri Daniel-Rops.

**The following is the text of a Circular Letter sent on 3 October by the Congregation for Divine Worship to the Presidents of Episcopal Conferences.**

# Indult for Use of Roman Missal of 1962

## *LETTER TO THE BISHOPS*

Most Rev. Excellency :

Four years ago, by order of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II, the bishops of the whole Church were invited to present a report:

- concerning the way in which the priests and faithful of their dioceses had received the Missal promulgated in 1970 by authority of Pope Paul VI in accordance with the decisions of the Second Vatican Council;
- concerning the difficulties arising in the implementation of the liturgical reform;
- concerning possible resistance that may have arisen;

The result of the consultation was sent to all the bishops (cf. *Notitiae*, n. 185, December 1981). On the basis of their replies it appeared that the problem of priests and faithful holding to the so-called "Tridentine" rite was almost completely solved.

Since, however, the same problem continues, the Supreme Pontiff, in a desire to meet the wishes of these groups, grants to diocesan bishops the possibility of using an indult whereby priests and faithful, who shall be expressly indicated in the letter of request to be presented to their own bishops, may be able to celebrate Mass by using the Roman Missal according to the 1962 edition, but under the following conditions :

- a) That it be made publicly clear beyond all ambiguity that such priests and their respective faithful in no way share the position of those who call in question the legiti-

macy and doctrinal exactitude of the Roman Missal promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1970.

b) Such celebration must be made only for the benefit of those groups that request it; in churches and oratories indicated by the bishop (not, however, in parish churches, unless the bishop permits it in extraordinary cases); and on the days and under the conditions fixed by the bishop either habitually or in individual cases.

c) These celebrations must be according to the 1962 Missal and in Latin.

d) There must be no interchanging of texts and rites of the two Missals.

e) Each bishop must inform the Congregation of the concessions granted by him, and at the end of a year from the granting of this indult, he must report on the result of its application.

This concession, indicative of the common Father's solicitude for all his children, must be used in such a way as not to prejudice the faithful observance of the liturgical reform in the life of the respective ecclesial communities.

I am pleased to avail myself of this occasion to express to Your Excellency my sentiments of deep esteem.

Yours devotedly in the Lord

✠ Augustin Mayer, Pro-Prefect

✠ Virgilio Noè, Secretary

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### WISE WORDS

"Throughout my 38-year membership of this House, I have always felt deep affection and respect for its traditions: traditions which have survived the test of time should not be lightly discarded".

Lord George Thomas on retiring  
as Speaker from the House of  
Commons.

Father Bryan Houghton sees the Indult restoring the use of the Roman Missal of 1962 as something for which all traditionalists should be grateful. At the same time, he recognises the Indult as essentially an armistice giving ground for negotiation, which we may hope will lead to permanent peace within the Church.

# The Indult

FATHER BRYAN HOUGHTON

THE Indult of October 3rd, 1984, in favour of the Old Mass was received by the laity with unfeigned joy and gratitude. At last traditionalists would be incorporated once more in the fold of the Church. We had felt like lost sheep, forgotten by our shepherds. We bleded, sometimes bitterly, in the desert; but we went unheard. Suddenly we discovered that the Holy Father had heard us. It was wonderful. We were far too sore from years of persecution to feel triumphant. We were merely immensely grateful.

We soon realized, however, that there was likely to be a gap between the Holy Father's intention and its execution. How would the Episcopal Conferences, the individual Bishops, their diverse commissions, and the clergy react? Was it not probable that, with a shrug of the shoulders, the Indult would be filed in a cabinet and forgotten? In order to make it work, somebody would need to have the courage to make it work. Our gratitude remained, but our hope declined.

### *Pope John Paul's Intention*

The Pope's intention was perfectly clear: to reunite the flock, to admit us bedraggled sheep back into the fold. There were, of course, some conditions, but we expected that. To most of us these conditions seemed odd rather than difficult. What they amounted to was that we should recognize the Magisterium of the Church. But of course we do! Otherwise the Indult itself would have no value.

We then learnt that Fr. Schmidberger, the Superior of Archbishop Lefebvre's Confraternity of St. Pius X, had refused to accept the Indult because of the conditions. This was, indeed, a sad blow. Our poor little Indult would have to battle against traditionalist missions as well as Episcopal commissions.

However, Fr. Schmidberger has probably clarified the situation. He has firmly separated the "liturgical problem" from the "Lefebvre problem". Up till now, Rome had always amalgamated the two problems. But they are quite distinct and, taken together, both are insoluble; taken separately, a solution can be found for each. Moreover, Fr. Schmidberger has clearly marked a watershed. When I went into opposition some eighteen years ago, in fair measure it was the intolerance of the official Church which I found intolerable. Over the past few years, since the election of John Paul II and the appointment of Cardinal Ratzinger, the intolerance has gradually changed sides. How sad!

### *Indult an Armistice*

Before dealing specifically with the conditions, I wish to make two remarks. Firstly, could anyone in their senses really imagine that Rome would suddenly announce an *unconditional* surrender to the old Mass. It is inconceivable. In theory the Pope is an Absolute Monarch and can do what he likes, yes. But in practice he is hedged in by Cardinals, ministries, commissions, synods, Episcopal Conferences, a swarm of bishops and the concrete situation which is not of his making. If one gives a little thought to the matter, it becomes astonishing that the Indult has ever emerged at all. It must have required immense determination.

Secondly, it is perfectly clear that the Indult is not, and is not intended to be, a permanent peace. Its very conditions prove this, as we shall see. Before peace can be made, there must be an armistice. That is precisely what the Indult is. If the armistice is accepted, we can negotiate for peace. If it is rejected, the war will continue and it will not be the fault of Rome.

Now let us examine the conditions for an armistice. There are in fact five, not four as the Indult suggests.

### *A Condition Open to Criticism*

The first is not presented as a condition but is part of Archbishop Mayer's prefatory letter. In fact, however, it is perhaps the condition most open to criticism. I translate the operative sentence word for word, without pretence to turn it into English. The Pope . . . "grants to diocesan Bishops the faculty to use an Indult by which priests and faithful, who are *explicitly specified in a petition* to be shown to their own Bishop, are enabled to celebrate Mass, using the 1962 missal . . ."

"Explicitly specified in a petition". How many priests, I wonder will spontaneously stick their necks out? In how many parishes are the laity sufficiently organized to make them stick it out? The intention of the passage is doubtless excellent: give the Old Mass to the people who want it. But it is quite impractical. The only clergy who can make such a petition without a qualm are the regulars, the members of religious orders who are not directly subject to the Bishop.

Instead of leaving the initiative for the use of the Indult to the laity and local clergy, it is the Bishops themselves who should be asked to organize one Old Mass in each deanery for a trial period. Not only would the clergy be spared from sticking their necks out, but the Bishops would not lose face by having to give in to local pressure. Indeed, it is my experience in life that that the grand gesture, magnanimity, pays; it is meanness which does not. The advantages of such a solution are so obvious that one hopes it will be adopted.

Now let us broach the four conditions recognized as such by the Indult.

### *An Unexceptional Condition*

1. The priests and laity who stick their necks out and ask to use the Indult must part company from those who deny the licetity, validity and doctrinal soundness of the New Mass, as promulgated by Paul VI in 1970.

One must notice the date. The 1970 edition corrected the heretical clause 7 of the *Institutio Generalis* of 1969: "the Mass is the synaxis or assembly of the People of God".

I fail to see how any Catholic can take exception to this condition. The New Mass is liturgically lamentable. It is unprayable. It is open to every variety of abuse—as we know only too well. That is all true. But can a Catholic believe that the Visible Church no longer gives the means of salvation to Christ's flock? No, he cannot. If he does, he is no longer a Catholic.

### *A Restrictive Condition*

2. The second condition is open to much criticism. It is very restrictive. The Old Mass is to be celebrated only for the group of people which has petitioned for its use; it can be said only at a place, at a time and under circumstances approved by the Bishop, but not in a parish church unless allowed by the Bishop in unusual cases.

The object of this little bundle of restrictions is perfectly clear. It is to prevent us bedraggled sheep from contaminating the immaculate ewes and lambs in the official flock. In fact, we are to be recognized as members of the flock only so long as we are segregated in separate pens. This obviously runs clean contrary to the Pope's intention of uniting the flock. How has this come about?

The clause is a summary of the objections raised by the Bishops to the Pope's idea of liberating the Old Mass. The Holy See started to consult the Episcopal Conferences on the subject over a year ago. I have personal evidence that the general form of a conditional Indult was already agreed before March, 1984. It was the price the Pope had to pay to secure an armistice from the Bishops.

The principal absurdity in the clause lies in the injunction that the Indult should not be used in parish churches "unless allowed by the Bishop in unusual circumstances". Apart from its inherent "divisiveness", it cannot be applied universally. In Catholic countries the place is littered with non-parochial churches and chapels. Not so Protestant England. England, in fact, is itself an "unusual circumstance". However, even England has a net-work of

non-parochial chapels; our monasteries and convents. I have already said that the regular clergy are in a privileged position to ask for the use of the Indult. We now learn that they, almost exclusively, can provide the proper place. Is it the hope of the Holy See that the Old Mass should be revived primarily through the religious orders? In practice, it looks like it. They could certainly do it calmly, persistently and far better than we seculars. This would make sense of CN 1248 in the new Code, by which "the obligation of assisting at Mass is satisfied wherever Mass is celebrated in a Catholic Rite". Yes, the bedraggled sheep, excluded from the parochial pen, are at liberty to run off to the abbey, priory, friary or convent. This makes sense. It implies, however, that the Religious Orders make a determined effort to reintroduce liturgical order in their communities. It is time they did so, anyway.

### *An Admirable Condition*

3. The third condition requires the use of the Missal of 1962. This is admirable; we are spared the "bidding prayers" and are allowed the Last Gospel. We are to use the old calendar.

The question of the calendar is not unimportant. The advantages of the old one are clear: a) it was strictly liturgical and not merely scriptural (as is the new); b) the busy clergy could easily discover what their great predecessors had said on any given Sunday; which is not easy with the new. This is among the reasons for the undeniable decline in the dogmatic content of parochial sermons. Along with the old calendar, the tradition of preaching—what to say and how to say it—has been lost.

On the other hand, the object of the Indult being to unite the flock, it is anomalous to allow two calendars. The maintenance of a dual calendar is a further proof, if one were needed, that the Indult is an armistice and not a final peace.

### *An Interesting Condition*

4. The fourth condition specifies that the two liturgies, old and new, should not be mixed together; no hybrid Mass is permitted.

This is interesting on two main scores. Why should it be a condition for the use of the Indult. Are there thousands of priests all over the world clammering for a "hybrid Mass" which could be used by adorers and activists, traditionalists and progressives alike? Actually, I only know of one book which suggested this solution in any detail. It was my own *Mitre and Crook*. It is unobtainable in English but the French version, *La Paix de Msgr. Forester*, has had a wide circulation and, to my certain knowledge, has been carefully considered in Rome.

Furthermore, since last year and due to the publication of *L'Eucharistie Salut du Monde* by Père Joseph de Sainte-Marie, O.C.D. (theologian at the Teresianum in Rome), there has been considerable pressure for a revision of the Novus Ordo. What is original about this pressure is that it emanates from the clergy and not from the laity.

I repeat: why should this strange and apparently gratuitous clause be made a condition for the use of the Indult? The only ready explanation which comes to hand is that Rome is in fact considering, a) a reform of the Novus Ordo, and b) the possibility of a "common" or hybrid Mass. What it does not want is that the clergy should jump the gun. Indeed, in recent years this has been a constant trouble.

#### To sum up.

1. We should be immensely grateful for the Indult in spite of its somewhat mean and sometimes absurd restrictions.
2. It is an armistice: the first step to peace.
3. The Indult will only work if it is made to work. This requires magnanimity, the noble gesture, on the part of our Bishops. We call them "my Lord", may they act as such. It also requires religious order in the Religious Orders; much depends on them.
4. Although we traditionalists may still be excluded from our parish churches, we are no longer excluded from the Church. It is this that matters.

**At a joint meeting of the Fidelity Forum and the Mindszenty Conference in Cincinnati on September 8th, Fr. Kenneth Barker, S.J., presented the following analysis of liberation theology. Fr. Baker is editor of *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*. Acknowledgements and thanks to the Author and *The Wanderer*, U.S.A.**

# Liberation Theology

KENNETH BAKER, S.J.

**L**IBERATION theology began in Latin America as an attempt to find a solution to the poverty and misery that are very widespread. It has taken root, however, in many parts of the Third World, especially in Asia, India, Africa, Taiwan, and South Korea. It is currently having an effect throughout the free world, including the United States of America.

The claim is often made that liberation theology is original and that it is a product of Latin America. That is not quite accurate. The intellectual tools it works with are almost exclusively European. A quick look at the authors cited by Gutierrez reveals the following familiar names: Congar, Chenu, Rahner, Kasper, Bouyer, de Lubac, Duquoc, Thils, von Balthasar, Haering, Spicq, Alfaro, Schillebeeckx, Dumont, Metz, Moltmann. It claims to be a Latin American theology, but with the exception of Pironio, Sanchez, Vasquez, and Mariategui, all the quoted authors are European. There is also extensive use of Karl Marx who, obviously, is not a Latin American.

Because of the many books and articles that have been written about liberation theology in the past 11 years, the ideas of the movement are quite well known. Here in the U.S.A. priests and nuns have been exposed to it through Orbis Books and also through courses offered in seminaries, convents, and at universities during the summer school courses.

Liberation theology took its origin from the plight of the poor and downtrodden. It is a passionate theology about good and evil, poverty and riches, capitalism and socialism, religion and politics. The stated intentions of the liberation theologians are very noble—they want to take practical steps to rid Latin America of poverty and oppression. We do not question their good intentions and their sincerity. But we do question their basic assumptions, methodology, and basic ideas. It is appropriate to ask whether or not their proposed solution to the problems of poverty in Latin America will really work.

I will now develop the following points: 1) What is liberation theology? 2) How did it develop? 3) What does it mean for American Catholics? 4) A critique of liberation theology.

### I. *What is Liberation Theology?*

Please note that the movement is called both “theology of liberation” and “liberation theology”. The phrases used are interchangeable. Let us first examine the two terms. In Catholic intellectual tradition “theology” is understood as the study of God and all things related to Him under the light of divine Revelation. “Liberation” means freedom, salvation and redemption in the Biblical and theological sense, “liberation” freedom from the power of sin, Satan and death. Its primary meaning is religious and spiritual, not political.

Liberation theologians like Gutierrez change the meaning of both words. For them, “theology” means rational analysis, using the so-called scientific concepts of Marxism, of the economic-political situation in Latin America. To do this it mixes together words and concepts from Marxism and the Bible. It studies the economic, political, and social situation of the peoples of Latin America. It is social-political theory wrapped up in Christian clothing. This “theology” studies not God, but man.

The word “liberation” is borrowed from the Christian meaning of salvation in Jesus Christ — deliverance from sin, Satan, death, and the reward of eternal life with Jesus and Mary in Heaven. But a key point to remember is that it is not understood in a religious, transcendent sense.

These theologians are talking about *political* liberation, that is, the destruction of capitalism, which they see as the major evil in the world, and the establishment of socialism.

For them, "liberation" means a whole range of things: 1) class struggle in the Marxist sense, and violence if necessary; 2) the destruction of capitalism, especially in the U.S.A., and the worldwide establishment of socialism; 3) changing the "sinful structures" of Western society, including the Catholic Church. In their view, the Church should be revolutionary, democratic, constantly adjusting to the social conditions of the times, on the side of the "poor" in the class struggle with the rich; 4) the goal is the establishment of the "new man" of Marx, Lenin, and Mao—a "new society" based on universal equality and the elimination of classes. The stated intention is to eradicate poverty, inequality, and oppression.

Cardinal Ratzinger said recently that the Church is taking a critical look at liberation theology "because the ideas behind it try to raise social theories to the level of theology" (*NC News in Arlington Catholic Herald*, August 23rd, 1984). He went on to say that this is dangerous "because it can lead to theocracy and to a level of certainty that is not proper to social and economic theories". Liberation theology, he said, "mixes two levels, that which is Christianity and that which is social ethics". In the context of Catholic theology, the point he is making is very important. For, theological statements based on divine Revelation offer a level of certitude that opinions about economic and political matters can never attain.

It is difficult to give a clear, concise definition of liberation theology, but I will attempt a descriptive definition and then offer some characteristics of the system.

"Liberation theology", then, is a theory and practice of revolution, based on the Marxist analysis of society, which uses Christian words, ideas, and images. The starting point is poverty and misery in Latin America. The means are class struggle and violence. The end is the destruction of capitalism and the establishment of socialism. This, they claim, will produce a world of equality and abundance for all mankind. They affirm that real Christians must be Marxist. Thus, the Nicaraguan priest

Ernesto Cardenal, currently a minister of the Sandinista government of Nicaragua declared in 1978: "Christians are not only able to be Marxists but, on the contrary, to be authentically Christians; they ought to be Marxist". Gustavo Gutierrez says: "Class struggle is an actual fact and neutrality on this point is absolutely impossible".

Here are some of the main characteristics of liberation theology: 1) it starts with poverty and misery in Latin America, especially as seen in contrast with the prosperity of North America and Europe after World War II; 2) it works with European intellectual tools. One writer made the observation that it carries the imprint "Made in Germany"; 3) it uses the "Marxist analysis" of society as determined by poverty, oppression, and class struggle. The argument, as summarized in the recent Vatican instruction, goes like this: "An intolerable and explosive situation requires effective acts which cannot be put off. Effective action presupposes a scientific analysis of the structural causes of poverty. Marxism now provides us with the means to make such an analysis, they say. Then one simply has to apply the analysis to the Third World situation especially in Latin America".

4) Liberation theology, like Marxism, is opposed to private productive property, profit, and entrepreneurship; 5) individual freedom must be sacrificed for the good of the "people"; 6) socialism as the only alternative to capitalism must be established; 7) the Bible must be reread and interpreted in Marxist categories; 8) the Catholic Church must be changed: it must be radicalized and join in the fight for socialism and against the "sinful structures" of capitalism; it must be transformed into a "people's Church", that is, democratic, non-hierarchical, with complete equality for all, including the ordination of married men and women; 9) it is strongly anti-American. The problems of Latin America are blamed on U.S. multi-national corporations. Once again, as in the case of 19th century colonialism, the problems of Latin America are seen to lie *outside* Latin America itself namely, in the U.S.A.

10) Liberation theology uses a distorted view of "theology". It is actually not a *theology*, but rather an

*ideology*, in the sense of a narrow view of reality that is extended to embrace the whole of reality; 11) it offers a complete reinterpretation of Christianity in political terms. It is neatly summed up in the expression: "Christianity means political action for socialism".

## *II. Origin and Development of Liberation Theology*

The proximate beginning of liberation theology is usually located in the Second Conference of the Bishops of Latin America which was held at Medellin (near Bogota, Colombia) in 1968. At that conference the Bishops highlighted the plight of the poor in Latin America, their oppression by the rich, and the need to remedy the situation. A major presentation of liberation theology appeared three years later, written by the Peruvian priest, Gustavo Gutierrez. In 1973 his book was translated into English and published by Orbis Books under the title *A Theology of Liberation*.

### *Presuppositions*

It might help to point out some of the intellectual presuppositions that made possible the development of liberation theology in Latin America. After Vatican II, that is, after 1965, there was a dramatic change in the theological climate. Because of the debates surrounding the Council, the challenge to Catholic dogmatic and moral teaching, the appearance of biblical theology, the re-evaluation of all aspects of Catholic life and culture, the existing theology was considered by many influential Catholics to be no longer valid.

The idea of openness to the world found in the Council documents, especially in *Gaudium et Spes*, was often transformed into a naive faith in science. Psychology, sociology, and Marxism were considered "scientifically" certain, i.e., necessarily true. On the other hand, historical research on the Bible and the beginnings of Christianity, which had been going on for centuries, was considered outmoded and false because of the exegetical work of Protestant scholars like Rudolf Bultmann. His demythologizing" of the Bible changed the most basic ideas about Scripture and Tradition.

There was also a new philosophical situation in Europe. Existentialism, until then very popular, with its emphasis on the individual and its inability to give coherent meaning to reality, was found wanting. It could not fill the void of meaning felt by many in the wake of the devastation of World War II. Neo-Marxism stepped forward with its claim to have all the answers worked out "scientifically" along the lines of Karl Marx and his followers.

A third factor was the challenge of poverty, misery, and oppression of millions of poor peasants and destitute city dwellers in the vast continent of Central and South America. This was seen as intolerable, especially when contrasted with the great wealth of North America and Europe now paraded before them daily in films and TV programs.

### *Epistemology of Liberation Theology*

On the basis of his demythologizing and his use of Heidegger's existentialism, Bultmann set up an opposition between the "Jesus of history" and the "Christ of faith". According to him, the New Testament tells us a lot about the *faith* of the early Christian community, but precious little about the real or historical Jesus. So Jesus becomes a *presupposition* of the New Testament, but He is hidden in the world of Judaism. In this way Bultmann's exegesis shook the historical credibility of the Gospels.

Therefore, since orthodox Christology is based on the historical truth of the New Testament, and that truth was put in doubt or even rejected as a result of Bultmann, Christology was opened up to a new interpretation. For some liberationists, Jesus is no longer the Son of God or the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. He is reduced to the merely human level and becomes a radical revolutionary not unlike present-day Marxist heroes.

The attack on the historicity of the Gospels also led to a denial of the *Magisterium* of the Church, that is, her divine teaching authority bestowed on her by Christ and guaranteed by the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. The "hermeneutics" of Bultmann now became the ruling fashion. This means that Jesus must be interpreted in terms of what He means for the man of today. Jesus thus

loses all historical, objective validity, and the Church is incapable of teaching anything as infallibly or certainly true.

In the late 1960s the Marxist analysis of history was considered to be "scientific", that is, objectively and necessarily true. Accordingly, since the world must be interpreted in terms of the class struggle, the only choice left is between capitalism and Marxism. The liberation theologians identified, falsely, the biblical concept of the "poor" with the Marxist notion of the "proletariat". This deceived many into thinking that Marxism's concern for the poor is the same as that of Christian charity.

Some of the decisive concepts used to arrive at these conclusions are *people*, *community*, *experience*, and *history*. It is important to note that the concept of history in liberation theology totally absorbs the concept of God and Revelation. Although they usually do not state it in such blunt terms, history is God and God is history.

### *Some Basic Concepts of Liberation Theology*

At this point I would like to indicate how good Catholic terms are given a change of meaning in liberation theology. "Faith" becomes commitment to Jesus, or "fidelity to history"; it loses its objective, intellectual content. "Hope" is confidence in the future and a commitment to work for the future. "Love" is an "option" for the poor' and requires a commitment to get involved in the class struggle. The "Kingdom of God" is understood in a partisan sense, that is, identification with the revolutionary party and working for the establishment of the "new society", "Eucharist" is a liberation feast understood in a political sense, "Redemption" becomes political liberation; it loses its transcendent, transtemporal meaning.

The liberation theologians have a special liking for the word "praxis". It is related to the English word "practical". In their sense it means political activity of any kind that promotes class struggle, it is "active presence" in society on behalf of the revolution. According to them truth cannot be understood metaphysically. The criterion of truth is action. In fact, action is truth. For them, orthopraxis is the only true orthodoxy. According to this view,

the historically determined contents of the Bible are not binding absolutely. As Cardinal Ratzinger says, the hermeneutic of history as experienced in the community — that is, in partisan political groups, is the instrument of interpretation. In simple terms, this means that all reality is in flux and that truth is wholly relative to the present historical situation.

### *III. What Does Liberation Theology Mean for American Catholics?*

Even though the particular application of liberation theology was developed in Latin America by theologians who had studied in Europe. It goes beyond Latin America. For one thing, it is strongly and explicitly anti-American, in the sense of anti-Yankee. The poverty of Latin America, in their thinking, is blamed on the attitudes and actions of the rich in North America.

Our own clergy, seminarians, and nuns have been deeply affected by liberation theology. This is attested to by the great success of Maryknoll Orbis Books in spreading their books on liberation theology and Christian Marxism among these groups. For example, many American priests and nuns have been, and are, involved in revolutionary activity in Latin America. The present foreign minister of Nicaragua, Fr. Miguel D'Escote, was the director of Orbis Books in Ossining, N.Y., for many years before leaving his post and going to Nicaragua to join the anti-Somoza forces.

Liberation theology affects American Catholics also in the sense that it offers a completely new way of understanding the Church, Bible, Christ, sacraments, and what it means to be a Christian in the world. According to that theory, the goal of Christian life is the establishment of socialism, not the salvation of one's soul, not personal union with God in the sense of the great saints of the Church, not eternal life in Heaven. In short, liberation theology denies the transcendent meaning of the Catholic Faith.

Thus, liberation theology, proposes a "new Catholic Church" purified of metaphysics, transcendence, spirituality, virtues, sanctity, salvation, eternal life. Understood in this way, it affects all Catholics everywhere. No one is

exempt, not even the Pope. Also, it goes beyond confessional boundaries and would absorb all churches into a new universality. Simply stated, it reduces everything to politics.

#### *IV. Critique of Liberation Theology*

As Pope John Paul II has said on more than one occasion, the expression "theology of liberation" is acceptable in Catholic theology, provided that it is properly qualified and understood. The recent Vatican instruction makes the same point: "In itself, the expression 'theology of liberation' is a thoroughly valid term: it designates a theological reflection centered on the biblical theme of liberation and freedom, and on the urgency of its practical realization". Its primary meaning, therefore, is liberation from sin and the infusion of divine grace. Those who have been liberated in Christ; that is, those who are Christians, must also work for human freedom and human dignity in the social order.

The social-economic-political situation in many areas of Latin America, which liberation theology is trying to change, is indeed unjust and must be remedied. The real question is about the proper means to be used. Liberation theologians propose a Marxist, violent solution. The *Magisterium* of the Church proposes working out a solution by means of dialog, persuasion, and class cooperation in an atmosphere of freedom, charity, and mutual respect. The Church does not accept the Manichean dualism, into which liberation theology falls, of holding that mankind is divided into two distinct classes — the poor who are good and the rich who are evil. So we do not criticize liberation theologians for their good intentions, but for the means they propose for the soluton of the problems of poverty in Latin America.

#### *Some Negative Aspects of Liberation Theology*

At this point I would like to single out some of the errors of liberation theology. All of them, obviously, do not apply to each author who has espoused the theory.

1) Liberation theology has a very limited, indeed false, notion of the nature of theology. As Cardinal Ratzinger

has said, it confuses social theory, social ethics, economics, and politics with sacred theology. In the sense that it is a limited view of theology, and raises that to an absolute, it is an ideology. In actual fact, it is an ideology of revolution.

2) Liberation theology offers us a false notion of history, Revelation, and God. It identifies God and divine Revelation with human history which is thought of in the Marxist sense of process, of matter in motion. It identifies nature and grace. Just one consequence of this is the denial of original sin and the recognition of man's inherent limitations, his inclination toward sin and injustice — an inclination that cannot be cured by any new social structure such as socialism.

3) Liberation theology falsely assumes the "scientific truth" of the Marxist analysis of history. It is atheistic and materialistic, and so necessarily denies the spiritual dimension of man.

4) Liberation theology absolutizes politics into the queen of the sciences. It therefore unseats sacred theology. The revolutionary party is seen as infallible, since it is based on "Scientific" Marxism. In this system, Church and religion are absorbed into the totalitarian state. History has come full circle—once again we have a union of altar and throne, only this time it is a Caesaropapism of the Left.

5) Liberation theology betrays Catholic Faith by subordinating it to an ideology — radical socialism and/or Communism. Communists and leftists of all stripes can easily embrace this kind of "theology" and use it to further their own totalitarian ends. The present use of liberation theology by the guerrillas in El Salvador and by the Sandinistas in Nicaragua bears this out. Once the Church in Nicaragua, under the leadership of the brave Archbishop Obando y Bravo, began to resist the intrusions of the State into Church affairs, the Marxist-Leninist junta began to show its teeth and its true color, namely red.

6) Liberation theology divinizes politics. Politics is the absolute; it is God. This inverts the proper order among the sciences and invests a subordinate science with a certitude and dignity it does not have.

7) Liberation theology distorts basic Gospel values, especially when it uses charity or "love" to promote class struggle and violence.

8) Liberation theology sacrifices the imperfect present for a mythical, utopian future; it is willing to sacrifice personal liberty for mass state activity as in the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba. In the name of an abstract, future humanity, it is willing to be inhuman right now. Liberation theologians write extensively about the poverty in Latin America and blame the U.S.A.; they rarely, if ever, criticize the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, or any Communist country. In fact, Cuba is seen as the model for the future of Latin America.

9) In the terms of classical philosophy, liberation theology is a system of pantheistic immanentism. In the philosophical order it is materialism and relativism; in the political order it is totalitarian. In my opinion, liberation theology is really another form of brutal Marxism—this time dressed up in gentle Christian garments. Liberation theology only *appears* to be Christian. At its roots it is atheistic materialism diametrically opposed to the Catholic Faith. We are clearly warned to beware of wolves in sheep's clothing. We should also recall what Issac said in the *Book of Genesis*: "The hands are the hands of Esau but the voice is the voice of Jacob".

## V. Conclusion

Let us thank God for the divine guidance of the supreme *Magisterium* of the Church and for Pope John Paul II. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit they guide us on the way of truth, in the footsteps of Jesus in these chaotic times.

Listen to Pope John Paul in what he says about true liberation and true theology. I highly recommend his address to the Latin American Bishops at Puebla, Mexico in 1979 (see Fr. James V. Schall, S.J., *Liberation Theology*, Ignatius Press, 1982, pp. 331-354). He emphasizes *the whole truth about man*, both material and spiritual. In this matter he often cites *John* 8:32, "You will know the truth and the truth will make you free", and *Gal.* 5:1, "For freedom Christ has set us free". During a general

audience (Feb. 21st, 1979), speaking on the same subject, the Holy Father said: "The theology of liberation must, above all, be faithful to the whole truth about man" (Schall, p. 399).

Let us be grateful to our Holy Father for the guidance he has given the Church in this difficult and important matter. We should also thank Cardinal Ratzinger and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for the recent instruction on liberation theology. Both of these sources will be a great help to all in the future to sort out the good from the bad in liberation theology.

The Holy Father and Cardinal Ratzinger say in the recent instruction on liberation theology: "The class struggle as a road towards a classless society is a myth which slows reform and aggravates poverty and injustice. Those who allow themselves to be caught up in fascination with this myth should reflect on the bitter examples history has to offer about where it leads. They would then understand that we are not talking here about abandoning an effective means of struggle on behalf of the poor for an ideal which has no practical effects. On the contrary, we are talking about freeing oneself from a delusion in order to base oneself squarely on the Gospel and its power of realization" (p. 32).

A little further on they say that pastors (i.e., bishops) "must look after the quality and the content of catechesis and formation which should always present the whole message of salvation and the imperatives of true liberation within the framework of this whole message".

They then spell out what they mean: "In this presentation of Christianity, it is proper to emphasize those essential aspects which the 'theologies of liberation' especially tend to misunderstand or to eliminate, namely: the transcendence and gratuity of liberating in Jesus Christ, true God and true man; the sovereignty of grace; and the true nature of the means of salvation, especially of the Church and the sacraments. One should also keep in mind the true meaning of ethics in which the distinction between good and evil is not relativized, the real meaning of sin, the necessity for conversion, and the universality of the law of fraternal love".

In this urbane yet forceful article, Sir John Biggs-Davison argues that "People are the means of development and its end". This sums up the totally Christian position that marks his writing here.

# Malthus, de Sade and David Steel

SIR JOHN BIGGS-DAVISON, M.P.

THE idea of population control fermented in the French Revolution. In England Malthus said: "Either birth rates must be reduced or death rates will rise due to lack of food and other resources". Malthus was a respectable and reverend gentleman. He never advocated abortion. In contemporary France however, almost two centuries before Mr. David Steel, with his Abortion Bill, the Marquis de Sade was proposing induced abortion for social reasons and the control of population. In 1795 this utterly depraved revolutionary aristo declared destructiveness to be one of nature's first laws and therefore no crime. He approved of murder, advocating a republic whose population was limited by infanticide and abortion. He regarded a large population as but extra mouths to feed, parasitic upon a republican State. Large families were all very well in a servile monarchy:

Do not put up with these disgraceful fruits of one's debauchery. One disposes of these hideous consequences in the same way as the results of one's digestion.

Are there not echoes of de Sade in Isaac Asimov's declaration, "Babies are the enemies of the human race"? (Science fiction indeed!) Norman Borlaug making his Nobel (not Lenin) Peace Prize address, spoke of the "population monster" and the "population octopus". The demographer Kingsley Davis said that "... the Twentieth may be called either the century of world wars or the

century of the population plague". Davis pronounced that "over-production—that is, the bearing of more than four children—is a worse crime than most and should be outlawed". (Lady Biggs-Davison, take to the hills!)

The Ban the Baby campaign is hysterical and unscientific and based on inaccuracy. "Think of a number" statistics have been used to terrify the ill-informed with the bogey of universal starvation and exhaustion of resources. The Brandt Report with its excommunication of "surplus population" was materialistic, humanist, devoid of reverence for Creator and creation. Clerics loved it.

Certainly, the population of the world has increased, though not continuously, is increasing and, barring catastrophe, will increase. According to the United Nations Demographic Yearbook for 1982, the growth was from 2,525 million in 1950 to 4,586 million in 1982. During the last ten years it grew by 770 million souls, equivalent to the entire present population of Latin America and Africa south of the Sahara. But the annual rate of growth declined from 2 per cent to 1.7 per cent. Fertility is down by more than 40 per cent in East Asia, nearly 25 per cent in Latin America and about 20 per cent in South Asia. The UN Secretary-General's report for 1984 records:

During the 1970s the downward trend in fertility intensified throughout the world: the total fertility rates declined during this period from 4.5 to 3.6 births per woman, a 22 per cent decrease.\* In the developing countries, the rates decreased by 26 per cent (or, if one excludes China, by 15 per cent).

In China, which contains roughly a third of the population of the developing countries, there was a 54 per cent fall.

In 1969, UN predicted a world population of 7,500 million by 2000. The figure has had to be revised. The current projection is something over 6,000 million. UN indicates a 1.5 per cent growth at the turn of the century (1.8 in developing, 0.5 in developed regions). According to the Henley Centre for forecasting, in 2000, the world's population will cease to grow and will stabilise at between

\*The total fertility rate measures the average number of births per woman during her childbearing years, assuming that present fertility rates by age group remain constant and disregarding any mortality.

6 and 5 billion. The Centre expects moreover that because food production is growing faster than population—which is not universally appreciated—there will be cheaper food.

In England, wrote Dr. Colin Clarke, "Eventually, with immense reluctance, our ancestors had to give up their agreeable hunting and fishing and take to the laborious and degrading pursuit of agriculture". Malthus was unable to foresee the results of industrialisation. He theorised about England and Europe—and has been proved wrong. When Malthus was writing the population of this country was about 10 million. Since his day, it has increased five-fold. So have wheat yields.

Population does not rise inexorably. The European birth rate is a cause of concern. On the one hand, abortion on a genocidal scale; on the other, the distressful cries of the infertile answered in the brave new ways considered by the Warnock Committee. Could our race die out? The population of the European Community, countries heir to a matchless civilisation carried across the globe, is expected to grow by less than 3 per cent by the end of the century. Recent fertility rates in the United Kingdom are about 2.1. In Federal Germany, it has been estimated that 200,000 more babies will be needed every year to maintain the existing population.

Yet one hears no *mea culpa* from the Ban the Baby lobbies. It is not long since the Lane Committee was being told that our island was over-crowded and that the working population was having to support too many young people. The problem in fact is how a vigorous working population will be maintained sufficient to support the increasing numbers of elderly for whom some population pundits are recommending euthanasia.

In some developing countries a rapid growth of population has led to a rapid growth of resources and standards of life. A continent formerly supporting a few trappers, fishers and hunters now feeds 2000 millions and exports food to other countries. To quote Dr. Clark again, this time on expanses of black Africa, Asia and Latin America:

Careful analyses have shown that, until population density rises to about 27 persons per square kilometre,

it is impossible to drive away the wild animals and to cut the scrub which harbours the tsetse fly. Still less is it possible for such sparse communities to build the roads, water supply, schools, etc., on which more advanced societies depend.

The Chinese who prosper are those who inhabit congested Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore where there is freedom of enterprise. They contrast with the Communist mainland where the number of persons per acre is about half that in the United Kingdom. The International Planned Parenthood Federation itself reported that migration to Calcutta made that city more prosperous.

Yet ignorance and indelicacy still characterise much journalistic comment on these matters. Even the *Sunday Telegraph* Colour Supplement of 5th August, 1984, carried a centre-page heading "Counting the Cost: the Threat of the Baby Boom". This at a time when the death rate in the world is going down and the birth rate is also decreasing, with some reduction in the growth of population. The amoral fail to understand a moral stand on abortion. If such a stand is taken, they search for the sordid motive. Thus, in the *Sunday Times*, also of 5th August, Rosemary Richter alleges that at the UN Population Conference in Mexico City the Americans took up the slogan of the previous such Conference, at Bucharest in 1974, "development is the best contraceptive", for "purely domestic political reasons".

In stopping funds for the IPPF because of its involvement in abortion, President Reagan was said to be pandering to James Buckley, the Moral Majority and "the arch-conservative lobbies in the US". The article is headed: "US 'inflicts' morality on a world fit to burst". But abortion is immorality without benefit of quotation marks. Mrs. Ferraro and Senator Kennedy may play with faithless words. *New Scientist* (9th August, 1984) may sneer at the President for "paying political debts to the anti-abortion lobby" and justify the activities of the IPPF by the presumed improvement and promotion of the "health of women and human rights". But without enter-

ing the vexed philosophy of Natural Law, one may assert that there is no "right to choose" to kill and the United States, which is not always wrong, is demonstrating that to deny that "right" is not a Roman Catholic, or even Christian, peculiarity. The innocent unborn have their "human rights" too—even in "pluralist" societies.

American delegates at Mexico City were cold-shouldered. Sweden (who else?) called a press conference to announce a gift of £8 million to the IPPF. However, the talk was not, as in Bucharest, of a humanity outstripping food and necessities. The Social Service Under Secretary Lord Glenarthur, was isolated among the delegates of major powers in asserting that "the question of the ultimate carrying capacity of the planet becomes more critical and more immediate". He spoke of "over-emphasis on abortion" as an "extraneous issue". He announced that the IPPF would receive its share of the £9.5 million that the United Kingdom is to contribute to non-governmental organisations in 1985. Neither Lord Glenarthur's attitude nor the Government's "neutrality" on abortion, referred to by the Prime Minister when I wrote to her to protest at its failure to back the USA, are worthy of the Conservative Party with its tradition of Church and Christendom. As for the Minister's audience, "it is not nearly well enough understood that constant harping on the need to contain the growth of the world's population is understood by those to whom the message is addressed as patronizing neocolonialism of the most offensive kind". (*Nature*, 9th August, 1984.)

The President relies on the sound arguments formulated by Julian Simon of the Heritage Foundation and the late Hermann Kahn in their book *The Resourceful Earth*. Despite predictions, sometimes prompted by greed, that a natural resource is dying out—petroleum was said to be approaching exhaustion soon after the second world war—despite the pessimism of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in *The Limits to Growth* and of the *Global 2000 Report* to President Carter, known reserves of most of the important materials have all risen year by year. The US Geological Survey confirms this.

As for food, the Overseas Development Institute reports:

If the appropriate technology can be found, there is no reason why African farmers should not achieve similar results to their counterparts in Asia.

with its "Green" Revolution. The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation reports that only half of the world's potentially arable land is under cultivation.

Lecturing on "Population and Hunger" at the Human Rights Society Symposium in London on 27th October, 1973, the late Dr. EF Schumacher found the link between the two "in that word responsibility":

The earth is rich enough for all of us: we are so fuddled with notions of 'progress' that we can't be bothered to learn the art of using it sensibly . . . hunger is overwhelmingly due to bad farming practices, some old and some new, and hardly at all to the number of mouths that need to be fed.

Lest the argument be dismissed as ravings from the Right or babblings of the eccentric, let us conclude by quoting Germaine Greer's book, *Sex and Destiny: The Politics of Human Fertility*:

Let's stop wasting energy in worrying about a world crammed with people standing shoulder to shoulder and counting the babies born every minute (one in every five of them a Chinese and just about all of them foreign) and begin to use our imagination to understand how it is that poverty is created and maintained.

Spengler wrote that to debate whether to have children was a mark of a declining civilisation. People are not pollution. A more populous London is cleaner than a century ago- and there are fish in the Thames. People are the means to development and its end.

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### SCALE OF VALUES

Listen to that note  
Is it the sound  
Of the Sacring bell  
Or merely a summons  
To a memorial meal?

—Fr. Joseph Brown

**By way of a very rare exception, the Editor is republishing this month in place of "Current Comment" an article that first appeared some years ago in *Christian Order* and which was itself a reprint in translation from the Italian original, published for the first time in the highly esteemed *Civilta Cattolica* in its issue of March 16th, 1974. At the time, the article was both devastating in its clarity and prophetic in its tone — to the point where, ten years later, it can be said to describe with frightening accuracy the present confused, divisive and dangerous situation as it exists in the Catholic Church today.**

#### CURRENT COMMENT

# The New Christianity a Snare and a Delusion

#### EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THE very influential and highly esteemed religious Review *La Civilta Cattolica*, published by the Jesuits in Rome, carried a remarkable article in its issue of March 16th, 1974, pp. 521-528. The article was remarkable not only for its assessment of events within the Church but also for its sense of urgency regarding the temptation provided by the new "Christianity". The author—doubtless the editor of the Review, though his name was replaced by 3 asterisks—shows how a new "Christianity" is in process of developing, a Christianity which not merely challenges, but even denies the essential truths of authentic Christianity. While retaining, for the most part, the usual theological language, it empties it of its true meaning, of its very substance and defends doctrinal errors directly opposed to the Gospel — which, however, it constantly quotes: it is in fact, an anti-faith. Moreover, by posing

as the defender of the poor and oppressed against the injustices and oppression of the powerful, it is able to exert an insidious attraction for the young, especially the generous-hearted young, and for those attracted by revolutionary Marxism.

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## THE NEW CHRISTIANITY

### *Catholics Who Oppose the Church*

To the onlooker, the Catholic Church today appears to be divided. The factors which bring the divisions to light are many; they are known to everybody since press, radio and television give them full coverage. Thus, there has emerged within the Church, a "Catholic Opposition" composed of many differing groups of "dissident Catholics" or "critical Catholics" as they like to call themselves.

### *A First Type of Argument*

What, in fact, lies behind such a phenomenon? In other words, what is it that divides Catholics today, over and above polemics concerning "the social option", the supposed riches of the Vatican, the collusion of the Church in matters of politics and economics?

As we see it, the primary cause of the division does not appear to lie in any practical consideration such as what the Church and Christians in general should do, for example, in order to follow the Gospel more closely. It is true that this is the theme to which critical Christians revert time and time again; and the most serious, the most cruel accusation they make against the Institutional Church is that she is unfaithful to the Gospel because she does not come down in favour of those options demanded of her, as they think, by the Gospel; instead, she prostitutes her mission by bowing before the strong, the powerful and the rich, upholding and giving her blessing to a capitalist system, which exploits and crushes the poor. Nevertheless, in our opinion, this is not the most important or radical cause of present divisions within the Catholic Church, even though it is around this argument that disaffection towards the Institutional Church is most easily crystallized.

### *Radical Confrontation in the Dogmatic Field*

In our opinion, the root of present divisions amongst Catholics lies in the theoretical, theological field; or, in simple words, in dogma. Indeed, it seems to us that, during the past few years, a new "Christianity" has come into being, a different Christianity, which can be distinguished from traditional Christianity not only by its new manner of posing certain problems, or by opening out new theological perspectives; but by reason of its central aim, which is to "reinterpret" the Christian Faith in a humanist, secular manner in order to make it more "meaningful" and interesting for modern man, since traditional Christianity, according to the reinterpreters, no longer means anything to him.

### *Contestation with Regard to Truths of Faith*

It is important to notice that this new "Christianity" derives from felt needs which are completely legitimate in themselves. It tries to resolve a real problem, which is widespread today. But, instead of trying to arrive at a valid synthesis of the traditional and the new, it casts into the background, if not completely denies, the essential elements characteristic of the Catholic Faith. In other words, it dilutes Christianity by laying such stress on certain of its aspects that, to all intents and purposes, it denies others which are equally essential, if not more so.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEW "CHRISTIANITY"

In order to enable the reader to gauge the accuracy of this assessment, a detailed examination of the outstanding and significant characteristics of this new "Christianity" must be made.

### *Anthropocentrism : Man-Centered Religion*

The first characteristic is most certainly anthropocentrism. For the new "Christians", it is no longer God Who holds the central place; it is man; and it is on man that they concentrate their entire attention and interest. Not that God is denied, but He is seen as in man and functioning as man. He is not loved and served in Himself and for

Himself. The love and service of God are reduced to the love and service of man. The first commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole strength", has been transformed into the second commandment, "Love thy neighbour", which becomes not the second but the only commandment. Thus, the primacy of man is substituted for the primacy of God. God exists, but He exists in man (which, for some, means man is God). As a result, the love of one's neighbour ceases to be, as St. John describes it, a sure sign of one's love of God. It has become, instead, the sum-total of "Christianity". The true Christian is no longer the Christian who loves God with his whole heart and who, for love of God, loves his neighbour and sacrifices himself for him; the true Christian is he who becomes involved in the world through his love of men and in them alone sees the true face of God. For this reason, true prayer consists not in seeking God in solitude, but in placing oneself entirely at the service of one's neighbour. Traditional prayer is regarded as a flight from work in the world entailing the risk of sterile introspection and preoccupation with one's own petty spiritual problems.

### *Over-Emphasis on the Present World*

Another fundamental characteristic of this new "Christianity" is involvement to the point of absorption in the world. Whereas the emphasis of traditional Christianity is placed on the future world and eternal life in God and awaits the full realization of His reign on earth at the end of time, the new "Christian" places the whole emphasis on this world and asserts that the Kingdom of God must be fully realized here below, within the context of history. The salvation purchased by Our Lord's death and resurrection will not be achieved in some mythical, way-beyond world but here, on this earth. It will consist in the liberation of man, his liberation from the evils which oppress and alienate him and which prevent him from becoming truly free—ignorance, hunger, underdevelopment, political oppression, economic exploitation. Thus, the principal evil from which man must be liberated is not personal sin but "social sin"—the present unjust social and political structure, which

enables one set of people to subject and exploit the others, must be recognised for what it is. At this present stage in our history, this social sin can be identified with the capitalist system, which, aiming as it does at profit-making, of its very nature alienates and exploits. Thus, to fight against capitalism is to fight for the true liberation of man, and hence for the coming of the Kingdom of God upon earth. Because both Christians and the Church have a duty to work for the coming of the Kingdom of God, they have the duty to fight against capitalism and against imperialism. However, since socialism alone is capable of waging a successful attack on capitalism those Catholics who wish to take part in the liberation of the poor and oppressed must opt for socialism, and, as a result, fight for the triumph of socialism throughout the world. Only the Christian who is committed to the liberation of the poor vis-a-vis capitalism and who opts for socialism is acting in accordance with the Gospel, which proclaims liberation for the poor; this type of Christian, and he alone, is worthy of the name.

### *A False Evangelism*

The third characteristic of the new "Christianity" is evangelism in this sense, that the new "Christians" both in thought and action, take their inspiration solely from the Gospel (*Evangelium*), and exclude all reference to Tradition and, especially, to the authoritative teaching of the Church (*Magisterium*). This exclusion of the Church and her teaching by the new "Christians" in their interpretation of the Gospel derives less from the Protestant principle of private judgement than from the clearly Marxist principle that the economic structure of a period determines its religious and cultural superstructure. From which it follows that the Church's interpretation of the Gospel, not only in the past, but also today, is misleading in that she interprets the Gospel in a bourgeois and capitalist manner. In fact, in the eyes of the new "Christians", the Church not only lives within the capitalist system, but is deeply involved in it, with the result that her rendering and interpretation of the Gospel is influenced by capitalist ideology. The exact opposite, they say, should be the

case. She should take her stand on the side of the poor and adopt the view of the oppressed; that is, of the proletariat. The Gospel belongs to the poor and it was to them alone, the new "Christians" say, that Christ announced it. Consequently, it is only the poor and those who take their stand at their side and fight for them, who can truly understand the Gospel.

### *A New Ecclesiology*

A fourth characteristic of the new "Christianity" is its new Ecclesiology; the following are its chief aspects.

- a) No distinction, still less a separation, can yet be made between "Church" and "World"; the Church is not only in the world; she is the world.
- b) The Church does not exist for herself; she exists for the world, to serve the world. She must not, therefore, seek to impose herself, to further her own prestige by making pacts with the powers of this world or by creating specifically Catholic institutions. She must efface herself by serving the world, and placing herself at its service. From now on, she must cease having her own Catholic institutions, which, moreover, invariably become centres of riches, of power and of the exploitation of the poor. She must be seen to be poor; strong only in the strength of her prophetic and liberating power through the Word of God. Then, and then only will the poor—and in particular the working-class—feel at home within the Church.
- c) The Church is essentially a fraternal communion in which all members are equal, assembled together through the Word of God, which must constitute the norm for every judgement, every action of the members of the Christian community. It is the community which will nominate and choose those of its members whom it wishes to act as "ministers" of the Word and of the Eucharist; at the same time, the priesthood itself continues to lie within the capacity and remains the prerogative of the whole community. As a result, the community can celebrate the Eucharist even without a "minister".

- d) The Universal Church is the fraternal communion of local churches, which consist of small, obscure, "grass-root" communities, gathered together through the Word of God, faithful to the Gospel and to the poor.
- e) The Catholic Church in its present form of "rulers" (hierarchy) and "ruled" (the people of God), with its institutions of domination and power; in collusion with political Powers, through concordats, and with capitalist exploitation, which she covers with the cloak of religion and from which she receives in return substantial benefits, is radically unfaithful to the Gospel and has become the enemy of the poor, in whose oppression and exploitation she actively participates. For these reasons, individual Christians and Christian communities, who wish to remain faithful to the Gospel, find themselves obliged to disassociate themselves from the Church, unless they are prepared to remain and act within it as a leaven of criticism in order to convert it both to the Gospel and to the poor.

#### *Passionate Devotion to Christ as Man*

The final characteristic of this new "Christianity" is a passionate devotion to and faith in Christ; not Christ the Son of God Who was made man (the Christ of Catholic theology), but rather the Christ-man, the Christ for others, the Christ who was the friend and defender of the poor, the liberating Christ seen as a revolutionary.

#### **ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTERISTICS**

If we now examine each of the characteristics of the new "Christianity" we shall immediately see that, while affirming justly felt needs which were, perhaps, somewhat neglected in the past, essential points of Christian Faith are either glossed over or denied.

#### *Anthropocentrism: Man-Centered Religion*

Thus, with regard to anthropocentrism, a justifiable, present-day need is met by exaggerating charity and service to man to the point where God is eliminated altogether or reduced to the status of man. As a result, Christianity becomes a "religion of man"; in effect atheistic, even though the name of God is retained. It becomes

a religion of the second commandment. Such a diminution is in radical opposition to the Gospel which teaches the primacy of God and of His love and sees in Him the source and cause of the love and service of one's neighbour. If man is worthy of love, it is because God loves him, and has accepted him as His son. If particular honour and service must be given to the poor man, it is because God loves him in a very special way; and in the Person of Christ has put Himself at his service and identified Himself with him. Without love of God, Christian love of man does not make sense.

### *Over-Emphasis on this World*

The same can be said of the second characteristic of the "new Christianity": over-emphasis on this world to the point of integration with it. It is right to oppose a certain limited, individualist concept of Christian spirituality centred exclusively on eternal salvation; it is right to affirm the value of the world and of history; it is right to say that the Kingdom of God must be striven for in this world. But this is no justification for pushing optimism concerning the world and history to the point where both become divinized, so to speak and, above all, it must not cause us to lose sight of the fact that the full realization of the Kingdom of God is not on this earth, but in Heaven. The true destiny of man will not be fulfilled in this world, which passes like a series of pictures on a screen, but in life eternal. There and there only will justice and love triumph because God will be our all in all.

### *A False Evangelism: Salvation and Liberation*

It is right to affirm that salvation includes liberation from the evils of this world, for Christ came to save the whole man in the whole of history, soul and body, spiritual values and material values. However, salvation cannot be reduced solely to liberation from the evils of this world; that would be to forget that, for Christ Our Lord, the radical evil was separation from God through sin from which the evils of the world spring and are its natural consequence. This is why Christ saves us primarily from original and personal sin and, as a result, He saves us from the effects and manifestations of sin.

It is fair enough to lay emphasis on "social sin", but sin cannot be reduced to a single "social sin"; that would be to forget that "social sin" and its consequences—unjust and oppressive social structures — are the fruits of the wickedness of the human heart; are, as it were, a coalescence of all personal sins. That is why it is useless to change existing social structures, if the heart of man remains unchanged.

One cannot therefore substitute the primacy of this world and history for the true primacy of the full realization of the Kingdom of God in eternity; the primacy of the temporal, therefore, for that of the spiritual. Salvation cannot be reduced to liberation from hunger, from underdevelopment, from political and economic oppression, anymore than sin can be reduced to social evil; in substance capitalism. In such circumstances, one would be left with a "decapitated" Christianity, a Christianity committed to a type of revolutionary political action indistinguishable from Marxism; altogether opposed to its true claim to be inspired by Christ and by the Gospel. Christ's message under such circumstances, would be transformed into a message of human, earthly liberation, a political ideology retaining only the name of "religion", the name of "Christian".

Again, with regard to the third characteristic of the new "Christianity"—its false evangelism; the pretension to interpret the Gospel independently of the Church is, in our opinion, an extremely grave matter. Apart from the fact that those who have separated themselves from the communion of the Catholic Church have always made this claim, it must not be forgotten that the Gospel is the Church's own book. Indeed, it originated in the Church. It was the Church which gave it birth. It was entrusted to her by Christ, and she it was who authenticated it and pronounced it worthy of belief. From this it follows that the Church alone possesses the secret of the true interpretation of the Gospel, for she alone is possessed of the Holy Ghost, from Whom the Gospel originated.

The Gospel does not belong to the poor; it belongs to the Church; that is to say, it belongs to the poor in so far as they form part of that community founded by Christ.

which is the Church. But to claim that she uses the Gospel as an ideological manifesto in support of capitalism is nothing short of an ideological Marxist assertion which we can afford to ignore, since Marxism itself derives from an ideological exposition of the nature and life of the Church. Moreover, to read the Gospel "from the point of view of the oppressed" or from a "leftist angle" would surely mean submitting Christ to the judgement of Marx, submitting the Gospel to the outlook expressed in *Das Kapital*. Would this not be to substitute the primacy of politics for the primacy of the Faith?

### New Ecclesiology

As for the ecclesiology defended by the new "Christianity" three points should be noted. First and foremost, to identify the Church with the world would be to destroy Her. The Church is in the world, but is not the world. Furthermore, to assert that the Church exists for the world does not mean that she must lose herself in the world and disappear within it. It is one thing to say that she should not seek the riches and power of this world; it is an entirely different thing to say that she should not have her own institutions because, while seeking an authentic inner poverty, it is essential that she be embodied in history and have, in consequence, a visible, institutional structure of her own; her own apostolic and charitable works. In other words, if one states that the official institutional Church of today is in radical opposition to the Gospel; radical to the point where both her hierarchical structure and her life are unfaithful to the Gospel and to the poor, one might just as well state that Christ and the Holy Ghost are no longer with the Church. What reason would there then be for remaining in the Church? Remain in order to save her? What presumption this would be! If Christ is unable to save the Church, who could claim to be able to do so? The only option would be to leave her to her fate and take a different path with Christ and with man; but without the Church, without ecclesiastical structures. Yet one could and should ask oneself whether, without the Church or, rather, by freely withdrawing from her, one could still remain with Christ

and not run the risk of finding oneself alone with man without Christ and without God.

### *Concluding Remarks: The New Christianity and Anti-Faith*

If this is the new "Christianity", we have cause to ask ourselves whether we have come face to face with a new form of Modernism which, in its efforts to make Christianity more "meaningful" for man today, has emptied it of its true substance. It is certainly true that the new "Christianity" does not deny any of the great Christian Realities—God, Christ, the Church, eternal life, the Kingdom of God, sin, salvation; but while giving nominal acceptance to these fundamental realities, it reinterprets them, and dilutes them to such an extent that little, if anything, remains of their true and authentic Christian meaning.

We are forced to the conclusion that this new "Christianity", as described above, is not only irreconcilable with traditional Christianity, but in radical opposition to it. Some readers may find this too severe a judgement. Their first argument will be that the new "Christians", in spite of their exaggerations and audacious behaviour, are far from wanting to deny the fundamental truths of the Catholic Faith. They will then point out that, in the judgements we have formed above, we have failed to take into account the new theories recently accepted in the field of theology; i.e. we have made no allowance for legitimate theological pluralism.

With regard to the first objection, we must at once make clear, that, in our examination of the complex of ideas which we have called the new "Christianity", we were not considering the *intentions* of those who profess these ideas; we were considering solely the ideas themselves and their internal logic. It could well be that the new "Christians" have no intention of denying the fundamental truths of the Faith and that they wish to remain in the Church. But that is not the crux of the problem. We are engaged in an objective examination of certain affirmations and the conclusions to which they logically lead. Secondly, it should be noted that an increasing number of those who began

by accepting the ideas of the new "Christianity" have ended by rejecting everything—the Church, the traditional Catholic Faith, institutional religion, in order solely to preserve "faith in Christ" which, for them, was identified with "faith in man".

With regard to the second objection, it must be pointed out that, in the case of the new "Christianity", one cannot, it seems to us, speak of theological pluralism. It is not a question here of different theologies; but a question, rather, of different creeds. To speak more clearly; in the new "Christianity", we are faced with a veritable alteration in the fundamentals of the Catholic Faith. It is not we who are making this very grave accusation; it occurs in the middle of the reply given by the Permanent Council of the French Episcopate to the working document of the International Assembly of "Critical Catholics" held at Lyons on 17th and 18th November, 1973.

It is for this reason that we consider it necessary to warn all those who—prompted no doubt by a genuine love of their fellowmen and of the Gospel—would be tempted to join the new "Christianity". In doing so, they run the risk of putting themselves outside the Church, outside the authentic Catholic Faith which was given to the Apostles by Christ, and transmitted through the Church. Unfortunately, the temptation of the new "Christianity" appears, outwardly in terms of fidelity to Christ, to the Gospel and to the "poor"; a fidelity which a Christian can only ignore at the risk of losing his soul. Moreover, it is a temptation which is very difficult to resist. This makes it even more necessary to realize that it is a temptation, a deadly snare to be avoided, by God's grace, with clarity of mind; by withstanding the relentless pressure of slogans and of fashionable theological and political theories, which are not to be considered correct merely because they happen to be progressive. In the words of the Acts of the Apostles:

"Take heed to yourselves and to the whole flock . . . . ravening wolves will enter in among you . . . . men speaking perverse things . . . . to draw away disciples after them".

Acts 20: 28-30

In the concluding discussion of their conversation piece Malcolm Muggeridge and Michael Davies discuss the bankruptcy of Soviet culture, precisely because divorced by the shock of atheist revolution from Russia's cultural heritage.

# Conversation Piece

## 5: EUROPE IS THE FAITH

MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE, MICHAEL DAVIES

*MD:* I remember Cardinal Newman said that if we got to the point where the Church was composed virtually of no-one but lukewarm Christians, it would be far better to have a great winnowing, and have most of the chaff blown away and just be left with a tiny remnant. He had a very good sermon, entitled "The Religion of the Day", in which he described the religion of his day as it was becoming apparent in the Church of England at the time. He said, "Religion is pleasant and easy, benevolence is the chief virtue, intolerance, bigotry, excessive zeal are the first of sins. It includes no true fear of God, no fervant zeal for His honour, no deep hatred of sin, no horror at the sight of sinners, no indignation and compassion at the blasphemies of heretics, no jealous adherence to doctrinal truth and therefore is neither hot nor cold, but in Scripture language, lukewarm". And then he said a really astonishing thing that I think few people would believe Newman had said. He said, "I will not shrink from uttering my firm conviction that it would be a gain to this country were it vastly more superstitious, more bigoted, more gloomy, more fierce in its religion than at present it shows itself to be".

*MM:* Very interesting, very interesting and very honest. There's nothing, there's no misfortune that can befall us except to be separated from God. There's no other misfortune. Everything else is history. The only terrible thing is to be separated from God, and that rests with us. We don't have to be. We never need be. We can wait on

God and He'll be there. But, when one talks in the way that we've been talking, we're said to be doomsayers and such and such things, which is nonsense. The doom, the only doom would be if these mad plans would work, you see; if there really had been a process whereby primeval slime had, over billions of years, turned into Bertrand Russell. That would be bad news indeed. But it isn't true.

MD: But I'd be surprised if at any time in history the general run of people, particularly of young people, had been less capable of assimilating the great ideals that are put forth in the Christian religion.

MM: I think it was pretty shaky in the fifth century, you know. And, if you read about it, I mean, the games were awfully like—they had an utter obsession with these games—very like television, and the reliance on free food coming in from North Africa was very like a welfare state. The same sort of thing; and, when the crash came, there was just nothing there to fight for, there was nothing, it was a lost cause before it began. And you have this Christendom which, after all, has had a most marvellous story which will be the admiration of mankind for ever, and what's it built on? It's built on the Gospels. That's what's inspired it. If you were to subtract from what's called Western culture; if you were to subtract the Gospels and related matters, there would be practically nothing left. The cathedrals would all be lost, the art would all be lost, the literature would all be lost, the mystical would all be lost—everything.

MD: That's something that's really struck me about Russia. Now, suppose you went to Moscow and removed all the ecclesiastical buildings that are there and you just had left what they've done since the Revolution, it's absolutely . . .

MM: Absolutely abysmal.

MD: . . . and throughout Europe, when you have humanists and people attacking the Christian Faith, you imagine if in England they removed all the parish churches, all the cathedrals, the beautiful . . .

MM: I had a very funny experience when we were doing the Dostoevsky programme in Russia because we wanted

to do some shots in a monastery for the talk about *The Brothers Karamazov*, you see, and of course the guide said, first of all, well, they'd never allow you to go there. And then he said, well, there aren't any monasteries; you know, that's how they go on. Anyway, I said well, we'll go to one that's being restored because you're restoring buildings very wonderfully. And we went to one quite near Moscow. It's very beautiful, it's the only good building—it's very interesting, it's the only good building that's gone on in the whole range of the Soviet regime restoring these old buildings; so, all right, they were working away at it and in my commentary I said that this was being restored; and no doubt it was with an eye to tourism, which is a very important element in their economy. But I said afterwards, a Christian might almost imagine that they were getting ready for the monks to come back. Well, our tour leaders with us, they really blew their tops over that. They said, "What are you talking about, how could you possibly suppose"? I said I hadn't said anything, I only said a *Christian* might suppose that, and Christians are barmy, we know that, they're absolutely crazy people, you don't attach the slightest importance to them. However, it got into the programme alright and I was very pleased with it because, in a sort of way, it might be true. Why should they show, in restoring these buildings, this wonderful skill and taste whereas, in the blocks of flats and, well, other buildings like Moscow University, designed in Stalin's time—I should think it's one of the most ugly and horrible buildings in the whole wide world, not excepting the American efforts in that direction. But there you are, and their mad rage and excitement over this single sentence was so interesting, and it's in their minds all the time.

*MD*: Yes, well, I think Hilaire Belloc said that Europe is Christianity which, to a certain extent, with the United States even—which is an off-shoot of European culture—would be true. And I think perhaps that, when one tries to remove the Christian element from our culture, there's really nothing left.

*MM*: Nothing at all, nothing at all, there's not a picture, not a building that's worthwhile, not a statue, nothing, nothing, no sacred music . . .

**MD:** Even in art, you think all, really most of the great art in Europe is Christian art, isn't it . . .

**MM:** Of course, of course.

**MD:** . . . I'm trying to think, can you think of any great —I don't think there has been a great Soviet artist, has there?

**MM:** There hasn't been any at all. And that's what made poor old Anthony Blunt to me seem such a tragic figure. He was supposed to be an art historian and he was boosting that regime and, if you see the standard of art there, it's about the same as when you have a Mayor of Stoke, or something like that, and they say, "We must have a portrait of the Mayor in the debating room". It's about that standard.

**MD:** And when the Soviets want to do anything abroad, they always, if they come over here, perform plays by Chekhov, or ballets by Tchaikovsky . . .

**MM:** . . . of course, of course, of course, because there's nothing else. They haven't even, they haven't got anything. In the days of the Stanislavsky theatre, which was going when I was there as a journalist in '32, old Stanislavsky was still there producing, and the only way they could fill the theatre for their terrible plays — they had plays like "Slag" or "Cement" or something like that — was that they never published the play that it was going to be, you see. So you'd go there hoping to see "The Cherry Orchard" and you'd get this "Slag". Of course we European journalists would just walk out, but the Russians didn't dare to do that because there were a lot of GPU men there, of course, and if they'd seen them walking out, they'd have been straight for the Gulag. They had to sit through "Slag". But productions like Chekhov and "Dead Souls", things like that, I can never forget them. They were marvellous. But, of course, they were all pre-Revolutionary.

**MD:** That is probably why — something we mentioned earlier — the Orthodox Church is making so many converts simply through its liturgy . . .

**MM:** Absolutely . . .

**MD:** . . . I once met a young Scottish Communist who had gone to Russia with a young Communist delegation

and he walked into an Orthodox Requiem Mass and he came out converted.

*MM*: Well of course. I tell you, the most moving service that I've been in the whole of my life was when I went down to cover that famine in Kiev, and on a Sunday I went into the Church. It was packed out, absolutely packed to the gills, because the Ukrainians hate the Russians anyway, rather as in Poland. I've never known such a feeling of people worshipping because the theme that you could sense—even though you couldn't understand it—was that we are now in a situation in which only God can help us. There's no other possibility, no other hope, don't mention anything else, only God can help us; and this was so strong that one was weeping; you couldn't help it, the effect of it was fantastic. And that was at the height of Stalinism, absolutely the height of it. They have got this wonderful liturgy and they are very, very fortunate and blessed in that it's there for them.

*(Concluded)*

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**"From Sunday . . . Communion will be received standing. Instructions will be given."**

**—from a Parish Newsletter**

Dear Father Jellyby,  
Is it not a sin,  
To take such good and generous  
And trusting people in?  
The Holy Father does not give  
Communion in the hand,  
So perhaps, if we could ask him,  
He would say we should not stand:  
And surely, your bewildered flock  
Might at the very least,  
Not have to dodge the "minister"  
Because they want the priest?  
Dear Father Jellyby,  
Is it not a sin,  
To take such good and generous  
And trusting people in?

*R. S.*

In these reflections, written on the Feast of Corpus Christi, the Author reveals the Devil at work in his all-too-successful endeavour to foster amongst many Catholics disbelief in the divinity of Christ. For this, loss of faith and what Father Croney calls "the crass stupidity of the moderns" are largely to blame.

# Et Homo Factus Est

PLACID CRONEY, O.P.

I AM writing this article on the feast of *Corpus Christi*. The exquisite beauty of the liturgy of the Mass and the mysterious and profound words of truth given us in St. John's sixth chapter are still fresh and living in my mind and heart. By way of introduction may I make the observation: how often do we hear people say: use your common sense. These same people would be abashed and horrified if we quoted to them, for example, from the chapter of St. John's gospel to which I have just now referred. Yet these words are words of pre-eminently common sense. They must be because they were spoken by Him who gave us sense, senses, heart, and mind and indeed everything.

## *Reflections on Corpus Christi*

Nothing is more full of sense, no greater food for the mind, nothing more reasonable than faith. The tragedy today is that the faith of our Catholic people, instead of being a burning light, is in many but a flicker which the first gust of wind will extinguish. Today—we say it with sorrow in our hearts—not an uncommon thing for Catholics we know—and not a few whom we sat next to in the classroom—to deny the faith that was in them. And more sadly to relate, who have but the haziest ideas about the supernatural life.

Who can account for this? The saddest thing of all is that those whose duty it is to be concerned about this tragedy of souls appear to be supremely indifferent.

For us Catholics, and indeed for everybody, belief in the existence of God is a matter of reason. Nothing can be more reasonable than faith. But people will not use their minds. The minds of our Catholic people—the number is vast—are atrophied. The TV has wounded the minds of many and killed the minds of many more. Many fear to use their minds for fear of what they might discover in the way of difficult duties to be done.

Catholics should know their obligation of receiving Holy Communion. "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, you shall not have life in you". Words plain enough for everybody to understand. Mortal sin alone prevents us from receiving Holy Communion, so mortal sin should be known for what it is—this is God's will. See the red Penny Catechism, Q. 121 and also Q. 324—"Unless you eat . . ." This is God's will and if we do not do what He says we shall commit sin. On hearing Our Lord's words many turned their backs on Him and left Him.

I offer you the supernatural—but only on condition that you *will* it. They did not will it. St. Peter, spokesman for the Church, answers "To whom (not what) shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life". And so we Catholics believe. Through faith we have entered into absolute certainty that "Thou art the Christ the Son of God".

Only in the Church which Christ founded—the Church where Peter's successor rules—will we find absolute certainty about the Blessed Sacrament. The Reformation in this land took away the living Jesus from every ancient church and cathedral, and substituted a thing of bread alone. It is the Person of Jesus—Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity—we must teach our hearts to discern and love in the Sacrifice and Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. So will our religion become an ever-growing friendship with Jesus *in person*.

Such are my reflections prompted by today's feast.

### *What the Devil is After*

*Et Homo factus est.* How the times have changed! Do you remember how we used to get down on both knees

and bow the head when we sang these tremendous words? Why was this act of faith, adoration and humility suddenly forbidden as if overnight? *Surely we have a right* to ask. I remember nearly twenty years ago when the new liturgists started interfering with the words of the Mass, I received—presumably all the priests received—a proposed translation of the Mass into English. It was circulated by some liturgical commission or other, and we were asked to make comments. Immediately, I spotted the hand of Satan. In the *Nicene Creed* I saw they had made a fatal mistake. In the middle were the words: “He was conceived by the *Holy Ghost* of the Blessed Virgin Mary and became a *man*”. Here was a plain denial of the Incarnation. I did not protest at the time as I realise now that I should have done. I think, possibly, I was too stunned. I was a coward. But, coming-to, as it were, some time later, I protested violently by letter to a certain person who was not without influence in getting things done, “A man” means one who is a person with human nature, and *no more than a man*. It came to me forcibly and with a shock, that this is what the Devil is after; that Christ is no more than a man. In which case the whole doctrine of Redemption goes, along with the spiritual nature of the Church, the Sacraments and all besides.

As a young lad I was taught the truth from the Catechism: “He was made Man”—not “A man”. *A Divine Person cannot become a human person*, just as I cannot become somebody else—I cannot become you.

### *Person and Nature*

One would like to ask these “theological liturgists” to define *Person* and *Nature*. Definition is *out* these days. In my student days we had to know by heart all the Thomistic philosophical definitions. Also we had to learn by heart every day an article of the *Summa* (in Latin). How many of our moderns could define *Person* and *Nature*? I would dare to ask them to define *Individual* or *Substance* or *Accidents*.

*Substantia est id quod per se stat et non in alio . . . briefly . . . quo stat per se.*

That which exists by itself without a supporting subject  
... briefly that which exists by itself.

*Accidens quod bone stat per se, sed solummodo inhaeret  
in substantia.*

That which does not exist by itself (as substance does) but  
only in and by a substance which it modifies.

*Natura est principium motus et quietis in eo in quo stat  
per se et non per accidens.*

The principle of activity and repose of a substance, not  
of an *accident*.

*Persona est substantia individua sui juris et alteri incom-  
municabilis.*

*Persona* is an individual intellectual substance alone in his  
own right, or better, a complete subsisting and incom-  
municable intellectual substance.

Those who know this will not have all this ridiculous  
discussion about when it is moral to abort a living foetus.  
Where do they think the animating principle (the soul) of  
the child comes from? Does not a baby become a *person*  
till it pops out of the womb? When does it become a  
person? Has it the potentiality of walking when it is  
asleep or unconscious? When does a dying man cease to  
be a person? Is a raving lunatic a person.

### *Crass Stupidity of the Moderns*

Our moderns are to be condemned, not so much for  
wickedness, as for crass stupidity. They use words as  
though they were no better than gramophones. *Homo*  
*cum est in honore non intellexit. Factus est insipiens*  
*sicut bestia agri et factus est similis illis.* A man who is  
foolish and stupid does not understand. He becomes like  
animals without reason.

They go to irreligious universities now to do their  
theology instead of to seminaries—ignoring the Council of  
Trent, they have abandoned their seminaries. The Devil  
is leading them by the nose. I thank God every day on  
my knees for the preparation I received.

I break no secret when I state that ten years ago Fr.  
de Rosa wrote a stupid book on the Incarnation and Orig-  
inal Sin—a no-good book. One of the stupidities it con-

tained was this: "It is easy enough to get children to believe that Jesus was God; the difficulty is to get them to believe that He was man (or a man)".

The opposite is true. It requires the divine gift of faith, a supernatural gift, in order for anyone to believe that Christ is God, whether child or adult. It is easy to see that Jesus is man, and without faith difficult to see that He was more than man. His humanity is evident. With sorrow in my heart I say that it is hardly surprising that de Rosa has thrown off his priesthood (as far as it is possible for him to do so) and taken to himself a wife.

### *Christ a Divine Being Who Possessed a Human Nature*

I had a dispute (friendly) with a priest friend about whether we can refer to Christ as a *human being*. He said "yes". I said "no". See III, XVII 2. *Utrum in Christo sit unum esse vel duo!* Whether there be one or two beings in Christ! There is *one being* in Christ, just as there is one being in the Holy Trinity. *Christ is not a human being. He is a divine being who possesses a human nature.* Just as I am a man who has what it takes to make me a Dominican. Therefore Christ is not a man. He is a divine person who has a human nature. He is a divine intellectual individual having an assumed human nature. But what happens to an individual natural substance is attributable to that individual, so what happens to the nature of Christ, or what Christ does by means of His human nature, happens to His *person*. Hence a divine person was born at Bethlehem, suffered on the cross and died on Calvary. Just as I, the individual person, was born and shall die. And when I die, my friends will not say that Fr. Placid's body has died; nor do I say that my head has got the ache. I, the person, have the headache—it is I that thinks, I that feels, I that get angry, joyful or sad. Hence to say that Christ was "A man" is equivalent to saying that Christ was a human person, which is the *Nestorian heresy*. But it has got into the new missal more than once. Similarly, the phrase in *Canon IV*—"Father, Thou alone art God" is *Arianism* and a denial of the Trinity, in words at least.

**Technology may well prove a more likely factor than ideology in the decline of Islamic fundamentalism.**

# The Secularization of Islam

CZESLAW JESMAN

DAR-AL-ISLAM, the Moslem world, stretches from the west coast of Africa to the whole of the Near and Middle East, the southern part of the Soviet Colonial Empire and far into Eastern China. Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan are predominantly Orthodox (i.e. Sunni) Moslem, as well as large sections of India, including contemporary Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia and, even, parts of the Philippines. Additionally, there are small communities of Moslems, more or less Orthodox, all over the world; particularly, among Americans of African descent.

### *An Undeveloped World*

The Moslem world, as a manifold whole, is still undeveloped technologically, economically and politically. And this, in spite of the still enormous quantities of unexploited natural resources, apart even from crude oil. Until a decade ago, the oil factor permitted a number of Moslem countries — Arab, Iranian and African — to exercise considerable influence in world politics, often with irresponsible recklessness. It needs to be remembered that OPEC is more than a simple international committee of oil-producing countries. In 1973, it nearly wrecked the international economy through a series of sudden and massive increases in the price of oil, of which they had, at the time, a virtual monopoly.

### *Oil and the Quranic Establishment*

This move could hardly have been dictated by any desire to enrich the Moslem World overnight and attain,

thereby, the western level of technological expertise. Such a desire would have been absurd, for the simple reason that not one of the oil-producing Moslem countries could have extracted, refined and used the crude oil on their own. True enough, if the economy of the West had collapsed through lack of oil and taken with it the basis of western social and political life, Moslem leaders of the oil-producing countries would have reacted with equanimity. World crisis or no world crisis, they were capable of reverting quite easily to their former tribal way of life, as most of them had known it not all that long ago. As a matter of fact, a fair number of Moslems would have rejoiced in having this choice thrust upon them. This applies particularly to those known somewhat inaccurately as "spiritual leaders" of Islam. They could be described more precisely as members of the Quranic Establishment. This evolved directly after the death of the Prophet. Following the split of the Dar-al-Islam into the irreconcilable wing of Sunni and Shia, the Quranic Establishment was solidly entrenched as the overriding source of influence in the Moslem World. It was composed of the leaders of prayers, along with commentators on the Sacred Texts (of the Quran), whose field included the juridical aspect of the Quran in the life of the individual Moslem and Islamic Society as a whole.

### *Islamic Confessional Rigidity*

It would be inaccurate to compare this Quranic Establishment with the Christian clergy or the priestly bodies of non-Christian religions. Knowledge of the text of the Quran and its traditional commentaries is all that is required formally of the "mullah". On the other hand, he must watch that not a word of the Quran—in its Arabic version, since only in his tongue is it "canonical" because, as such, transmitted to the Prophet by an Archangel from the original, inscribed on tablets of gold and kept in Heaven—is explained or adjusted. In consequence, the way of life of a nomad Arab tribesman living in the sixth century remains mandatory for any Moslem, wherever he may be living today.

Since the sum-total of human knowledge for a Moslem is contained in the Quran, which for him is revelation, any exegesis of it, any pursuit of possible concordance between the Islamic Faith and any other discipline is blasphemy and must be eventually eradicated. Thus, there is no distinction between the sacred and the mundane, and no necessity to apply logical distinctions. Graven images, for example, are forbidden by the Quran, but Saudi or Libyan passports are provided with photographs by their owners.

The above represents by no means the only instance of the absence of logical causality in the functioning of strictly confessional Moslem States. Saudi Arabia belongs as of right to a number of international organisations seeking to improve the human condition. Yet, a Saudi princess — of whom there are thousands — was decapitated in public for having married a commoner contrary to the tribal custom approved by the local Quranic Establishment. Her husband was executed at the same time. Elsewhere, two foreign technicians were flogged publicly and thrown into gaol for operating a still on their premises to produce alcohol for their own consumption. Saudi Arabia can afford such a degree of "confessional rigidity" for the time being because it is very rich and advantageously situated also on the map of international politics.

### *Poverty, Technical Need and Confessional Flexibility*

On the other hand, oil-poor Arab States would hardly adopt such a stance. Sexual obsession is a dominant aspect of all Moslem societies. Strict segregation of the sexes in public places and the heavy shrouding of women are the most striking features of this obsession. Despite this, Tunis—pro-western for the time being—as well as Algeria — overrun by Warsaw Pact personnel — countenance tourist booms on their shores, along with the inevitable near-nudity of western feminine beach-wear. These countries are poor and must put down hard cash for their military hardware and the hire of the alien skills needed to set it up and operate it. Colonel Ghadaffi, on the other hand, believes that he is oil-rich enough and powerful enough to take on the whole world, if necessary, in

his attempted conquest of Tchad. Small wonder that the Libyan beaches—set up and shaped out by the Italians with an eye to tourism half a century ago—remain empty and derelict nowadays, giving no cause for offence to Moslems, should they happen to wander there. Oil-rich Libya is able easily to take this line.

### *A Moslem Country in Transition*

Senegal is an altogether different example of a Moslem country in transition. It is untouched by the international rivalries that plague the Moslem countries on the Mediterranean littoral. Racially and historically Senegal is African rather than Arab. Dakar, its capital, owes its development as an ocean port to the French colonial administration. Its population is mostly African. Its cultural links with France are still very strong, with one-third of the inhabitants of Dakar Christian, mostly Catholics. Still, by and large, Dakar is a largely Moslem, though cosmopolitan centre of Black Africa. Some four years ago, a census was taken by the University of Dakar with regard to the religious beliefs of its students. This showed that only one-third of the Moslem students observed all the restrictions of Ramadan along with the most important dates of the Moslem calendar. Another third of its students were indifferent to religious problems; the rest declared themselves agnostic or Marxist.

### *Technological Advance and Islamic Fundamentalism*

In the early sixties the Chief Kadi of Northern Nigeria, a Sudanese by birth, admitted that he found more faith in his country of adoption than in his homeland. Similar takings of public opinion elsewhere in Africa and Asia followed the same pattern—in the more technologically advanced countries the westernised Moslem intelligentsia were least likely to declare themselves champions of Islam.

It would be idle to speculate why this should be so. The withering of the international, imperial and armed concept of the “Umma”—the common denominator and ideal of the Moslem Faithful—during the opening stages of World War I undoubtedly contributed to this evolution. At this time, the Khalif, the spiritual descendant of the

Prophet, happened to be the Sultan of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire. He declared war on a number of "infidel" States. Each one of these, with the exception of the United States of America, ruled over many millions of Moslem subjects. Spiritually, they owed allegiance to the Khalif. Yet, his declaration of war resulted in no global upheaval. One Moslem infantry regiment of the British Indian Army mutinied in Singapore in answer to the Khalif's call to rally to his green standard. This was the only instance of Moslem response to their spiritual leader's appeal to join the Jihad or Holy War, which he had proclaimed. Some centuries before this time, whole nations were set in motion by similar appeals. In 1918 one Moslem nation did, indeed, move. This was the glamorous Arab uprising *against* the decomposing earthly dominion of the Khalif, the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. Prompted largely by the British, Feisal and his fellow Sheikhs rose up in arms against the Turks.

After World War I, Islam was attacked by the Bolsheviks in Southern Russia; later in a different way but with perhaps, equal determination by the progressive and modernising forces in the Moslem colonial possessions of the European Powers in Africa and Asia. In both instances the reasons for the hostility that led to these two differing thrusts were not ideological but pragmatic — the strict following of the prescriptions of Islam made the efficient use of a constantly developing technology very difficult if not quite impracticable. The halting, in the early twenties of this century, of electric trams in the fundamentalist Moslem towns of North Africa for daily ritual prayer were picturesque and edifying practices; but stoppages of public utility plants, international communications and military moves for the same scriptural reasons were inconceivable. Freedom from such practices simply had to be won.

### *Technology Versus Ideology*

Meanwhile, external and internal pressure for the concession of political sovereignty to Europe's colonial possessions grew side by side with their increasing economic efficiency and effectiveness; the whole double-blade

process receiving fresh impetus in the wake of the Second World War. "Foreigners out" became the driving slogan not only of the mullahs, but of the budding indigenous technocrats. An increasingly secularist and materialist outlook and life-style was introduced into those parts of the world not only by Moscow's propagandists, but to a greater extent by American and European left-orientated graduate and post-graduate students of secularist universities and institutes of higher education in Europe and the United States. What academic learning these possessed had next to no relationship with the traditional arts and sciences of the Christian West. Thus it was that, in the new States of the post-colonial era, the emergent local elites were and are concerned above all else with the technological rather than the ideological. The latter was often discarded with ease or pushed into the background if technological wonders could be set up and caused to flourish in deserts hitherto barren and empty or in primeval forests. The process goes on.

Thus one can say with fair certainty that, sooner or later, Moslem States rich in mineral resources and, at the same time, adhering rigidly to the fundamentalist teaching of the Quran are bound to let their Moslem faith grow cold, not through conversion to an alien religion, but through the influence of an all-pervading secularism brought through the relentless proliferation of technological structures introduced by alien experts of non-Moslem societies and which have now become indispensable, as they think, everywhere in the world.

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# Book Reviews

**The Emperor** by Ryszard Kapuscinski; Quartet Books Ltd.; pp. 184; £7.95.

The throw-back in time is enormous. The picture, as it still was just over ten years ago, that of an incredible survival. My mind went back to Charles the First of England after I had finished the last fascinating page of this truly brilliant book. The character who dominates its story was, indeed, no contemporary of the Stuart King. The nearest approach in this century to Hailie Selassie of Ethiopia that I can think of was Czar Nicholas of Russia, though I would say the parallel with Charles the First was closer. Neither could Hailie Selassie be described accurately as a tyrant in the popular sense of that word. The rule of both himself and Charles was by supposed divine right which both England's King and the Ethiopian Emperor thought of most sincerely and stoically as enshrined in themselves. History has set their lives some three hundred years apart. In the case of each, death was followed by a rule tyrannical as theirs had never been, enforced by those who overthrew them. I am thinking of Cromwell's brutal carry on against the Irish; of the blood-letting of Mengistu that brought him to power in Ethiopia and the brutal oppression that followed it.

It is important to be clear about this in the case of Hailie Selassi. He was no brutal tyrant oppressing his people after the fashion, say, of that savage clown, Idi Amin, in Uganda or the crude ex-sergeant of France's colonial army, Bokassa, who set himself up as Emperor of the Central African Republic. These two were brutes. Hailie Selassi was anything but that, as Ryszard Kapuscinski brings out so brilliantly and with such understanding in the pages of his book.

The picture there presented is one of immense and all-pervading lassitude, which beset Ethiopian officialdom at all points of its provincial and central levels. All eyes being turned on the Emperor, who ruled by divine right, there were naturally enough no eyes for anything else. Out of this there came inevitably total incompetence. Nothing

else could be expected where the entire social structure was seen, so wrongly, as designed by God to remain as it was forever. And by none more clearly and, therefore, more firmly, than the Emperor himself. Set by God, as he saw it, as, at one and the same time, the pivot and absolute Lord of the whole, there could be no move, no breath of change, except that which came from himself. The way to his favour, then, was through the admission of this fact. This his courtier officials knew only too well. Incompetence was thus converted into massive stagnation. The Emperor never recognized it as such. He saw it, rather, as success; the preservation of what was, which he recognized as his God-given and, therefore, bounden duty. Isolated, alone, with no-one, really, whom he could trust, the greater part of his time was taken up with the minutiae of elaborate protocol and balancing out the supposedly competing interests of the courtiers who surrounded him. All had to owe their all to the Emperor; to do otherwise was to threaten the divinely appointed one of God Himself. To keep them in their place was to maintain God's order intact. Hailie Selassi devoted the major part of his life to doing just that.

Meanwhile, the country slithered into decay. The peasants went hungry, dying in shoals when famine struck. This they had always done. As Emperor and courtiers saw it, this was part of the divine order of things, of that which it was their duty to preserve, not with cruelty and oppression; but not at the risk of what they thought of as the near-sacrilege of massive and, therefore, outrageous change.

There could be only one end to this situation and it came with the deposition of Emperor Selassie on September 12th, 1974 and his death on August 28th, 1975.

It remains to repeat that this is a masterly book. At great risk to himself, its Polish Author sought out the then survivors of the soldiers take-over in Ethiopia and spent long hours in secret with them in Addis Ababa listening to their stories. It is through their stories that Kapuscinski tells his story of the Emperor's final years. The whole thing is wonderfully well done.

*Paul Crane, S.J.*

## SHORTS

I have just received from Andrew Pollock of the Holy Cross Catholic Bookshop (4 Brownhill Road, Catford, London SE6 2EJ), a really excellent handbook called *On Teaching the Faith*. Parents, in particular, rightly concerned with the kind of Religious Instruction and Moral Teaching their children are receiving in Catholic schools, will be greatly taken by it. They will find it offers invaluable assistance in the fight many of them are waging so bravely for their children's faith.

The book has an interesting history. It is produced by a sterling Catholic group in the United States called CREDO (Catholics for the Restoration in Education of Doctrinal Orthodoxy). Thomas P. Dolan was first President of CREDO from its inception in 1969 until his death on September 18th, 1984. This book is made up of excerpts from his letters to friends and members of CREDO. The excerpts are well selected and arranged not chronologically, but topically. The job of selection and presentation has been beautifully done. The result is a booklet of 92 pages, which will serve admirably those, particularly, who are standing up for their children in the religious confusion in so many of today's Catholic schools. I commend this book to them rather specially. I am advised by Andrew Pollock that he will be carrying a stock of these most helpful handbooks at a price of £2.75 (post free).

Invaluable by way of back-up in depth to Thomas P. Dolan's book is another just received from the United States for review, by happy coincidence. It is published by the Daughters of St. Paul at 50, St. Paul's Avenue, Boston, Mass. 02130. I am sure it could be ordered through the Holy Cross Catholic Bookshop or Carmel (Bookshop), 1 Beaumont Road, Plymouth PL4 9BA (CO). Entitled *Sacred in All Its Forms*, it consists of 42 talks of Pope John Paul II, along with seven documents of the Holy See and others put out by various bishops and Hierarchies concerning all aspects of human life from the womb to old age; exploring such topics as sickness, the handicapped, the family, the evils of abortion and euthan-

asia, responsible parenthood and so on. The whole is edited by the indefatigable and, indeed, prolific American Jesuit, who has contributed often enough to *Christian Order*, Father James V. Schall, S.J.

The book occupies 482 pages of good, well sub-headed print. It sells in paper-back in the United States for \$6.50. Even so, I would say, very much more than well worth it. It should be read with care, for it is full of "live" ammunition of the sort we need so much today.

On then to prayer, which is indispensable if action is to be anything like what it should be. The *Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, beloved for years and said by countless Catholics, has its own special relevance in the contemporary context which, in so many ways represents a struggle for what remains of the core of Mary's Dowry, the soul of the Catholic Church in England, betrayed once again, as it was so many years ago, by those who should have been the first to defend it. We welcome the Carmel Bookshop's recent publication of the *Little Office*, with the Latin and English facing each other throughout, on opposite pages. There is nothing "sporty" or "updated", thank God, about the English of the present impression. It is a reprint, after a lapse of years, of the September, 1914 edition. The price is £3.95.

Relevant, too, in this context, is Father John C. Edwards' latest, from the Catholic Truth Society. Entitled *Vay of Forgiveness* (£1.20), it expresses graciously and warmly and in practical fashion the part played by the sacrament of Penance in the life of anyone who calls himself a true Catholic. It is very warmly commended.

It is not only Our Lady who has been relegated to a post-conciliar backwater in the interests of pseudo-renewal and a somewhat lop-sided ecumenism. Devotion to the Sacred Heart has undersone a severe set-back, whilst Saint Joseph has suffered a demotion worse, if anything, than that inflicted on his Spouse. It is most encouraging, therefore, to see the publication in the last months of last year—in soft-back and in English translation—of *Joseph of Nazareth* by Father Federico Suarez. At £3.50, the price is not excessive for the book's 223 pages. It is published by Scepter Ltd., 1 Leopold Road, London W5 31B.

From the Irish Messenger Office (37 Lower Leeson St., Dublin 2, Ireland) at the very reasonable price of £2.50, there comes a collection of sermons, addresses, reflections and talks in praise of the Sacred Heart by Father Pedro Arrupe, former General of the Society of Jesus. Here, once again, there are to be found, we hope, the first beginnings of a redressing of the balance, distorted in the post-conciliar years. Well titled *In Him Alone Our Hope*, Father Arrupe's writings bear eloquent witness to his own fervent and unflagging devotion to the Sacred Heart. It is my hope that this book of 134 pages will cause that devotion to be shared by many more.

*Paul Crane, S.J.*

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